

IN THE UNITED STATES
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Patent Application

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Issue Date	August 31, 1999	Patent No.	5,946,360
Examiner		Group Art Unit	
Title	Communications System and Method with Call Expenditure Control		

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231
SIR:

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Please Add the following claims:

21. A method for interacting with a communication device having an assigned telephone number, comprising the steps of:

deriving said telephone number from a signal received from said communication device when said communication device initiates a call to a destination instrument,

accessing a database which stores information that associates telephone numbers with pre-paid telephone service and retrieving therefrom an amount of said pre-paid telephone service that is associated with said telephone number of said communication device,

establishing a connection between said communication device and said destination instrument when said amount is greater than a first predetermined threshold value, where a cost attributed to said connection increases with time during which said connection is maintained,

repeatedly determining when said cost of said connection comes within a second predetermined threshold of said amount, and

sending an indication to said communication device providing courses of action to be taken upon expenditure of said amount.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents at least two options from which to select said courses of action.
23. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents options for selection.
24. the method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents options for selection in order to maintain said connection when said cost exceeds said amount.
25. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents a prompt to a user of said communication device to alert said user of options available for maintaining said connection with said cost exceeds said amount.
26. The method of claim 21 wherein said indication is audible.
27. The method of claim 21 wherein said indication is a voice message.
28. The method of claim 21 where said amount retrieved from said database has a value, including a zero value, or a null value when said telephone number is not found in said database.
29. The method of claim 21 where said cost is charged against said amount at a preselected point in time.
30. The method of claim 21 where said first predetermined threshold corresponds to a cost for a predetermined unit of service for said call.
31. The method of claim 22 where said second predetermined threshold is greater than zero.

REMARKS

It is respectfully submitted that the added claims are supported by the specification and are allowable over the known prior art. Specifically, it is believed that none of the prior art provide for different courses of action that are provided to the user of the communication device (e.g., telephone) which allow the user to continue a conversation when the pre-paid amount has been exhausted.

Respectfully,
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Dated: 8/28/01

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Amendment Showing Changes Made

In the claims:

Please add the following claims: --

A method for interacting with a communication device having an assigned telephone number, comprising the steps of:

deriving said telephone number from a signal received from said communication device when said communication device initiates a call to a destination instrument,

accessing a database which stores information that associates telephone numbers with pre-paid telephone service and retrieving therefrom an amount of said pre-paid telephone service that is associated with said telephone number of said communication device,

establishing a connection between said communication device and said destination instrument when said amount is greater than a first predetermined threshold value, where a cost attributed to said connection increases with time during which said connection is maintained,

repeatedly determining when said cost of said connection comes within a second predetermined threshold of said amount, and

sending an indication to said communication device providing courses of action to be taken upon expenditure of said amount.

21. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents at least two options from which to select said courses of action.
22. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents options for selection.
23. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents options for selection in order to maintain said connection when said cost exceeds said amount.
24. The method of claim 21 wherein said step of sending presents a prompt to a user of said communication device to alert said user of options available for maintaining said connection with said cost exceeds said amount.
25. The method of claim 21 wherein said indication is audible.
26. The method of claim 21 wherein said indication is a voice message.

27. The method of claim 21 where said amount retrieved from said database has a value, including a zero value, or a null value when said telephone number is not found in said database.
28. The method of claim 21 where said cost is charged against said amount at a preselected point in time.
29. The method of claim 21 where said first predetermined threshold corresponds to a cost for a predetermined unit of service for said call.
30. The method of claim 22 where said second predetermined threshold is greater than zero.

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